



SMOKY MOUNTAIN CELEBRATION

Volume 1, Issue 6

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Smoky Mountain Region has a lot of celebrating to do. The region was able to move 448 children and youth to permanency. That is more children than some regions even have in state custody.

This did not happen easily, however. This was due to the hard work and commitment of the staff from Smoky Mountain.

All staff played a role in achieving this goal. Family Service Workers worked long and hard with families making sure that everything fell into place to achieve permanency. Supervisors tracked each case to make sure that tasks were being completed and any obstacles were being addressed. Every staff person played a role, either directly or indirectly in making the push to permanency a huge success.

What many of the staff involved in this tremendous effort didn't realize at the time was, what they were doing was Continuous Quality Improvement. This was CQI in one of its most simple forms, and look what a positive impact it had on everyone. Children are now in permanent homes. FSWs have lowered caseloads. Regional Managers have guided their staff to accomplish the goals the region had

set for itself.

The basic steps of CQI were even followed. First, the region leadership, using data, identified the issue that they needed to decrease the length of stay for their children.

Second, they brainstormed ideas on how to do this and set measurable goals for themselves. Action-steps were then set for each FSW and Team Leader.

The next step was on the shoulders of the FSW staff. Each looked at the children on their caseloads and tracked and adjusted actions to determine what would work for that particular family.

Finally, successes were shared. The meetings that transpired allowed staff to hear what others were doing and share the things that they had found to benefit families, as well as those things that did not help.

This push to permanency was a huge success for Smoky Mountain Region. It was a huge CQI success. A success that could have never happened if it were not for the employees in each of the seven counties that make up this region. The newest region in the state.

On Friday, September 12th

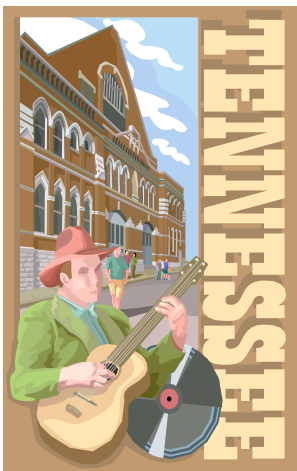
the region came together at First United Methodist Church of Sevierville to celebrate their accomplishments. Each county decorated a table to represent their work around permanency.

Cocke County moved 101 children to permanency and decorated their table with jars that had clear glass marbles. Each marble represented a child who had obtained permanency in their county. Blount County celebrated achieving permanence for 99 children.

Sevier County decorated their table with a Fall theme. Their county moved 75 children to permanence. Hamblen County had 69 children moved to permanent homes. They decorated their table with helium filled balloons with the first names of the children they had moved to permanence.

Jefferson County had 58 children placed in permanent homes. Claiborne and Grainger Counties had a name card for each of the children they helped find a permanent home. Claiborne celebrated permanency for 28 children and Grainger 18.

(Continued on Page 3)





CONTINUOUS QUALITY LEARNING

On Wednesday, July 30th a very informative training was held at the Metro-Davidson North Police Precinct in Hermitage, Tennessee. Regional Administrators, Group Home Directors, CQI Coordinators and a host of others gathered to discuss the progress made and challenges left to face in relation to the Continuous Quality Improvement process.

Petrina Jones-Jesz, Director of Policy, Planning and Performance Management, welcomed everyone and served as the facilitator for the training. Michael Cash, CQI Program Director, reviewed the six steps of the CQI process with the group and discussed how setting attainable goals and time specific action steps were essential in having a successful CQI meeting. He also discussed the importance of tracking progress and adjusting action steps when needed in order to assure goals are reached.

Clay Crook, Southwest Region CQI Coordinator, shared with the group how his region has set about to meet the COA PQI standards. Southwest Region has a series of binders that document what that region has done to meet each of the standards. Those binders included copies of the State CQI Manual, Regional CQI Plan, CQI team meeting calendar, regional score card, referral and resolution tracking instruments, various data reports, CQI training materials, and employee recognition materials, among other items. Clay also discussed how his region uses several methods to ensure that feedback is provided. Those methods include: sending out Regional Core Leadership CQI minutes to the whole region, documenting

CQI successes in the regional newsletter, and making sure that all minutes are stored on the regional H drive.

Lagena Rutherford, Northeast Region CQI Coordinator, spoke to the group about the COA mock review that was conducted in her region. She stated that the COA Mock Reviewer asked to see the regional plan and wanted to make sure that every person in the region was educated on and had access to the plan. She stated that the reviewers also wanted to see a folder of a specific project worked on from the beginning through resolution of the issue.

Shirley Crawford, COA Program Coordinator, discussed how one of the most important things we need to do is improve communication. The COA Reviewers want to see how information is shared with everyone in the region in relation to CQI. She suggested that each region and facility develop a one page list of CQI successes that is updated on a regular basis to share with employees and the Reviewers.

Tony Nease, CQI Program Coordinator, talked with the group about using the Quality Service Review data in the CQI process. He discussed how the scoring from state and mini-reviews need to be looked at as a "big picture" to help regions identify trends and brainstorm around how to improve the services we deliver to the children and families with whom we work. He also discussed the need to bring providers and community partners on board to look at how each region can strengthen the services delivered in each county. *(Continued on Page 3)*

SMOKY MOUNTAIN *(Continued)*

The goals set by Smoky Mountain were based on the Brian A goal for reunification and adoption. Susanne Lowe, Deputy Regional Administrator, reported that for the quarter ending June 30, 2008 the region exceeded the goal of timeliness of placement in adoptive homes by 2.8%. The region had no disrupted adoptions during this period and a reentry rate of only 4%. Eighty percent of all children and youth were reunified with their families within 12 months of entry into state custody.

Wendy Williamson, FSW Team Leader, stated that "the Cocke County staff has been very creative in finding resources and other assistance for families to ensure that permanency is achieved quickly. We celebrate each success as a team and it provides motivation to continue doing the difficult work that is required to accomplish our mission. The Permanency Celebration showed staff that their efforts are not going unnoticed."

Carla Kimble, Regional Administrator recognized each team for their hard work and gave out certificates of appreciation at the celebration. Commissioner Viola Miller attended the event and spoke to the group. Afterwards she served a cake that had been designed for the region by Conni Mitchem, FSW Team Leader.

Smoky Mountain has made great strides in achieving permanency for the children they serve. They are also becoming a region that is truly beginning to embrace the Continuous Quality Improvement process in all that they do as a region. This is evidenced by the support given to the process by their Regional Administrator and many members of her management team. All you other regions better watch out. There is a new kid on the block and they are bringing some competition to your doorstep.



CONTINUOUS QUALITY LEARNING *(Continued)*

Attendees were then divided into groups that looked at each PQI standard in great detail. The groups identified where they felt they were in meeting the standard and any strengthening that needed to be completed in order to assure the standard was met. Each group selected a spokesperson to report out where they felt they were in meeting each standard.

Judy Cole, Executive Director, then lead a discussion around setting action steps in order to follow up on issues identified during the training, and then the meeting was adjourned.

Most of the comments received about the training from those attending were very positive. Most people found the training to be very educational and helped them to realize what areas they needed to focus on once they returned to their region, office, or facility.

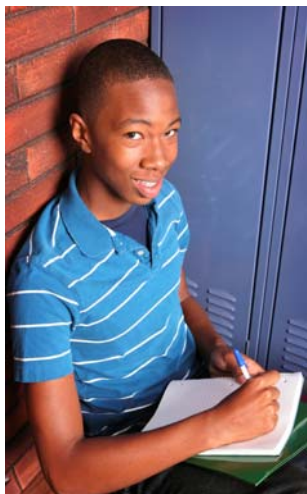
If you are interested in learning more about the Continuous Quality Improvement process in your region or about the COA PQI standards, please contact your CQI Coordinator. They will be more than happy to assist you.

NORTHEAST CQI SUCCESS STORY

by Lagenia Rutherford, CQI Coordinator



“Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime.” - Herbert Ward



I would like to share our issue with 24-hour entry placement and how we resolved it through CQI. Not only did we resolve the 24-hour placement entry issue but the overtime the initial plan was causing.

Beginning in March 2008, the Administration CQI team which consisted of the CQI Coordinator, CQI team specialist, Facilitator Team Leader, Permanency Support Team Leader, Well Being Team Leader, Resource Parent Support Team Leader, Placement Specialist Team Leader, OJT coach, Permanency Support CM3, and the two Placement Entry folks for Northeast had a CQI meeting with the issue being 24-hour placement entries, especially on weekend and holidays. The Team Leaders who were on on-call rotation for placement and making entries for placement were having difficulty getting the placements entered correctly and in a timely manner. Due to having limited training and not doing the entries on a regular basis it was causing, on the average, 10 hours overtime per week. That was the first problem. The second problem was the entries were not being done correctly, and the entry folks were having to make corrections the following work day. The entry team did the entries Monday-Friday 8:00-4:30 but were not responsible on weekends and holidays.

The goal was to get the entries done within a twenty-four hour time frame. The team wanted the number of placements entered within twenty-four hours to increase to 95%

and that there would be less errors with the placement entries.

The team proposed, with the agreement of the regular scheduled entry folks, that the two Northeast entry folks would make all the entries including weekend and holidays. They felt they could do it in 90% less time, have fewer errors, and increase the entry data to 95% by making all the entries themselves. As it is, they were assisting the Supervisor on call anyway which caused two people to have overtime, and caused much frustration that was not necessary.

The team proposed this would be a pilot project for three months and if this plan did not provide the results we were looking for, we would go back to the initial plan or revise this plan.

At the next CQI meeting in April, the team invited the Regional Administrator, the Team Leader over the 2 entry folks, and the entry team for Northeast. The team presented data showing the number of hours that they had used with the initial plan and where we thought we could cut the number of overtime hours.

The team showed how the number of placement entries should increase with less errors by having the two Northeast entry folks do all the entries rather than just the ones occurring Monday thru Friday from 8:00 to 4:30. We explained the months we wanted to try this and that we would reassess in June 2008.

The proposal was accepted. It was agreed by the team that if there was a conflict with the entry folks not being available on the weekend or holiday, the Resource Placement Supervisor on-call would fill in.

During the June CQI meeting, we reviewed the plan to assess how it was working. We all were happy to see that overtime hours had decreased from ten hours per week per Team Leader to less than two hours per week with the entry folks. The entry folks have been able to flex off these hours. The error rate is much less and our placement entries have increased to the goal we were shooting for.

We revisited the plan again this month during CQI and, once again, found the plan to still be successful. All involved are much happier, less frustrated, and our goals have been met.

Because of this resolution and the support from our regional leadership, we now know that through CQI, problems can be resolved and improvements made.



Not Just a Job —Part Two



In the last issue of the CQ Eye we discussed professionalism as it related to the image that we as professionals project to the children and families that we work with. That image, however, goes beyond what we wear and how we show empathy towards others.

Professionalism is also demonstrated in our actions. In order to be treated like a professional, you must act like a professional. It's really that simple.

Each of us needs to stand back and take a personal inventory of what we do on a day-to-day basis that may make others doubt our professionalism. The old adage that first impressions mean a lot is so true for the work we Social Workers do.

I recently overheard an employee talking to one of her peers about how she felt as if she was not respected by her fellow employees or her supervisor. She stated that she just could not understand why she was continually passed over for promotion, and why the Juvenile Court Judge acted like he didn't trust the work that she did.

I was able to formulate my own answers to her questions only a few hours later. I dropped by the local Juvenile Court to perform an evaluation on a new employee who was facilitating a Child and Family Team Meeting. That same employee was present in court.

I was shocked when I saw her

sitting in court with a bag of food from a local fast food restaurant at her feet. Even more shocked when I realized that she was sitting on the front row of court eating a hamburger. The smell of the French fries and hamburger was strong all over the court room. The employee didn't even seem to notice the dirty looks that the Judge or court staff were giving her.

I wondered to myself how often she does this. I also wondered exactly what the families sitting in court were thinking. I'm sure they were hungry after having spent all morning sitting in court waiting on their case to be called. What kind of image was she sending to the court and the families we work with?

The lack of professionalism can also be demonstrated by our in-actions. We have all experienced those fellow employees who never seem to volunteer to help out around the office.

You know who they are: those employees who never offer to ride with other employees when they need to transport children on their caseloads; employees who never seem to have time to cover the phones so the Secretary can go to lunch; employees who seem to think their dirty forks and coffee mugs will magically wash themselves when they put them in the break room sink.

So what makes a professional? According to a federal govern-

ment employee website, there are eleven indicators to being a professional civil service employee. One of those key elements is identified as teamwork and diplomacy.

This indicator speaks about how a professional is someone who places the success of the team above self-interest. A professional does not undermine the team, and always shows respect for team members and the clients they work with.

Also, they describe a professional as being flexible and open to change in order to benefit the team. Does this describe you? Are you sure?

As you do your personal inventory, think about what you do that benefits your team. What do you do that harms your team? Your actions or in-actions may be influencing others' opinions of your whole team or office.

As a Department we have been working diligently to engage our community partners. Those community partners can provide services that can help make our jobs easier and improve outcomes for the children and families. The better the image the Department has, the more community partners we can develop.

So, yes, the image you project on a daily basis matters. Think about that as you interact with team members, families, courts and other community partners.

Be respected. Be a professional.

"In the midst of global crises such as pollution, wars and famine, kindness may be too easily dismissed as a "soft" issue, or a luxury to be addressed after the urgent problems are solved. But kindness is the greatest need in all those areas - kindness toward the environment, toward other nations, toward the needs of people who are suffering.

Until we reflect basic kindness in everything we do, our political gestures will be fleeting and fragile.

Simple kindness may be the most vital key to the riddle of how human beings can live with each other in peace, and care properly for this planet we all share."

- Bo Lozoff

DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

*Putting the Pieces
Together*

436 Sixth Avenue North
Ninth Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-1290
Tony Nease - 865-594-7091 ext. 130

*A PUBLICATION OF THE
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JUST FOR FUN
CQI WORD FIND

L A S C R I B E S S W C T T O
T G S S I E C V R L L E V E L O
G A R D A Q E A O I C I E G I G
D R E G I O N L T I B V T N O G
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N E Q R T A C T I O N S T E P S
O T R R B O A D N E G A Y E L A
T F R S A F E E D B A C K A S O

Quality

Level

Minutes

Action Steps

Feedback

Team

Scribe

COA

State

Improvement

Referral

Brainstorming

Time

Suggestion Boxes

Leader

Change

Evaluation

Region

Data

CQI

Ideas

Goals

Stakeholders

Facilitator

Progress

Case Process Review

County